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Relationship of oral language to reading achievement in grade one

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF ORAL LANGUAGE
TO READING ACHIEVEMENT
IN GRADE ONE

by
Sister Agnes Marie Scherrer, SSND

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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This research paper has been
approved for the Graduate Committee
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Sister Marie Colette, O.S.F.
(Advisor)

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In this decade, teachers must be ready to meet the many challenges of the 70's and to help their students be adequately prepared for living in today's world. Every person has a right to read. Various avenues of reading have already been explored. Studies have been conducted to identify indicators of reading achievement.

Researchers are throwing new light on old problems in the use and misuse of language, in the methods of teaching and of evaluating children's skills and abilities. They point out that children's vocabularies are larger than in the past, that they use a more complex sentence structure and that TV and radio strongly influence speaking and listening habits.¹

Both listening and speaking are recognized as fundamentals in learning to read. "Evidence shows that children with the largest vocabularies and highest achievement in oral language continue to excel other children in reading ability as they progress through grades one to six."² Verbal understandings and abilities are a necessary foundation in establishing success in this reading ability.

¹Helen K. Mackintosh, Children and Oral Language, (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1964), p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 34.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent the oral language of beginning first graders would predict their reading achievement at the end of the same school year.

Specific objectives included an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Does oral language effectiveness predict reading achievement in a first grade child?
2. Was there any significant correlation between oral language and reading achievement in a first grade child?

Scope and Limitations

One group of forty first grade children of St. Mary School, West Bend, Wisconsin was evaluated in the present research. This study was limited to the use of the following tests: Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test,¹ Metropolitan Readiness Test,² Faith and Freedom Primer and First Reader Achievement Tests,³ and relied on only one stimulus situation using a story picture card.

Significance

The writer hoped to provide other first grade teachers with a tool to use in early September to measure the oral language of their pupils. The present study might be easily replicated.

¹Irving Lorge and Robert L. Thorndike, Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957).

²Gertrude H. Hildreth, Nellie L. Griffiths, and Mary E. McGauvran, Metropolitan Readiness Test Form A (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965).

³Sister M. Marguerite and Sister M. Bernarda, Faith and Freedom Primer and First Reader Tests (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1961).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Definition of Terms

Language is society's way of communication. Stauffer states that "language is a code that represents the learned behavior of a social community."¹

Language is not simply a collection of symbols. It is a *system* of symbols. We call the system in language *grammar*. It is a pattern of symbols which fits together in systematic ways. In learning language, the child learns both the symbols and the system at the same time.²

Modern linguists conceive of language as "a structured system of arbitrary vocal sounds and sequences of sounds used to carry on interpersonal communication and to manage the things and processes of human experience."³

The minimal sound units that occur in language and make differences in meaning are called *phonemes*. Phonemes are put together to make *morphemes*, and morphemes are combined into patterns of *syntax*.

Syntax is that "area of grammatical study dealing with

¹Russell G. Stauffer, "Certain Psychological Aspects of Children's Learning to Read," Reading Teacher, XXII (April, 1969), p. 634.

²Dr. Kenneth S. Goodman, "The Language Children Bring to School: How to Build on It," Grade Teacher, LXXXVI (March, 1969), p. 138.

³Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Reading Textbooks and the Quality of Reading of Selected Children," Bulletin of the School of Education Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana.: Indiana University, 1962), p. 5.

sentence structure and word relations as established by usage."¹ Chomsky, in his book *Syntactic Structures*, describes syntactic investigation and the technique of transformational grammar. He confirms that "syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis."²

Any technique used to describe a child's grammar must permit us to a) examine language at particular times in its development as a self-contained system and b) describe the changing processes of this system as the child matures. Such a technique is provided by a generative model of syntactic structures.

"A transformation is defined by the structural analysis of the strings to which it applies and the structural change that it effects on these strings."⁴

Lefevre states that "the American English sentence should be read not as a sequence of words but as a unitary meaning-bearing sequence of structural functions clearly signaled and patterned by a) intonation; b) syntactical functions in basic sentence patterns; c) structure words; and d) word-form changes."⁵ These were defined by Lefevre as:

1. Intonation: Intonation is the generic term for significant and distinctive patterns of pitch, stress, and juncture.

2. Syntactical functions in basic sentence patterns: There are possibly no more than four important sentence

¹Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959), p. 545.

²Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Netherlands: Mouton and Company, Publishers, The Hague, 1964), p. 11.

³Paula Menyuk, "Syntactic Structures in the Language of Children," Child Development, XXXIV (June, 1963), p. 407.

⁴Chomsky, Syntactic Structures, p. 111.

⁵Carl A. Lefevre, Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. xx, introduction.

patterns in American English. Variety is achieved through nearly endless possibilities of expansion, substitution, inversion, and transformation of these important patterns.

3. Structure words: About three hundred "empty" words, having few referents outside the language system itself, and relatively lacking in meaning or content; contrasted to "full" words having referents in the real world outside language. Structure words include many sets, such as noun markers, verb markers, phrase markers, clause markers, question markers, and sentence connectors.

4. Word-form changes (grammatical inflections, prefixes and suffixes): Word-form changes include noun plurals, possessives, verb parts, adjective comparison, and the like, as well as derivational prefixes and suffixes. Word-form changes include most of the bound morphemes.¹

In early studies, the size of vocabulary and length of the sentence were considered the chief criteria for measuring the maturity which children show in their use of language. Two studies by Strickland and Loban point out that these criteria are largely inadequate for measuring what constitutes the essentials of language.² Both of these researchers consider that length of *phonological unit* is a more satisfactory device. Loban defines a phonological unit as an utterance between definite pauses accompanied by a definite drop in pitch or a rise in pitch for inquiries. Phonological units embrace sometimes more than one traditional sentence and at times even less than a complete sentence, such as a subordinate clause alone.³

Another system of segmentation used by Loban was a *communication unit* which is a subdivision of the phonological unit. It can be identified by the semantic meaning which is being communicated and cannot be further divided without the loss of its essential meaning.⁴ This is what Watts calls "the natural linguistic

¹Lefevre, Linguistics, p. xvi, introduction.

²Mackintosh, Oral Language, p. 15.

³Walter Loban, The Language of Elementary School Children (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), pp. 5-6.

⁴Ibid., pp. 5-7.

unit."¹ The communication unit is identical to the T-unit used by Hunt in his analysis of written English. See his article, Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels.² In actuality, the communication unit in Loban's research "proves to be the grammatical independent clause with any of its modifiers. No communication unit includes more than one such clause."³

Beyond these two kinds of segmentation, a third element still remained to be accounted for, an exceptionally interesting and frequent occurrence that could best be described as a tangle of language, which did not make semantic sense and was impossible to classify phonologically or semantically. These language tangles have, therefore, been segmented separately and have been labeled *mazes*.⁴

Mazes were subdivided into four groups identified as (1) noises, (2) holders, (3) repeats, and (4) edits.

Noises were unintelligible sounds such as "ah," "er," and the like. Holders, such as "well," "you see," and "now uh," were used to hold attention. Repeats were repetition of words such as "you...you," "I think...I think." Edits were words used by the speaker which indicated a⁵ correction or change of direction in what he was saying.

These grammatical inaccuracies are termed "garbles" by Hunt and the Peabody team. McCaig refers to *garbles* as "any group of words that could not be understood by the investigators."⁶

Several authors have used another measure of verbal diversification. This "type-token-ratio (TTR) is the ratio of the

¹A.F. Watts, The Language and Mental Development of Children (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1948), pp. 65-66.

²Kellogg W. Hunt, Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 21.

³Loban, Language of Children, p. 7.

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

⁵Strickland, "Language of Elementary Children," p. 24.

⁶Roger A. McCaig, "How Not to Analyze the Syntax of Children: A Critique and a Proposal," Elementary English, XLVII (May, 1970), p. 615.

number of different words (types) to the total number of words (tokens) in a sample of language."¹

Earlier it was stated that length of sentence was no longer found to be a measure of maturity in the use of language. This might be due to the fact that many children tend to use *run-on units* of the sort illustrated below:

I used to have another dog and its name was Peanut but it got run over by a car and now I have another one and its name is Crickett and I have a big dog and its name is Shauntey² and the little dog always follows around Shauntey.

In this case, a more mature user of language would have divided this unit into several sentences through the use of subordination.

The Nature of Oral Language Skills

Growth and size of vocabulary; regional, national and international aspects of language; vowel and consonant, noun and verb, conjunction, and adjective; the syntax of oral and written language -- these are but a partial listing of the concerns of language skills.³

In speaking the English language, one expresses his meaning through various combinations of the basic phonemes or sound units of the language together with certain characteristic patterns of pitch, stress, and juncture, all put together in patterns of syntax. Children have learned these patterns, by ear and through experience, and most children have learned to use them freely and easily by the time they enter school.

Proficiency with oral language requires readiness and smoothness. Loban asserts that "...the ability to find words

¹Loban, Language of Children, p. 22.

²Strickland, "Language of Elementary Children," p. 26.

³Richard L. Marquard, "Language Development - A Proposal for Improvement," Elementary English, XLV (December, 1968), p. 1077.

⁴Strickland, "Language of Elementary Children," p. 1.

with which to express oneself -- and to find them readily -- is normally one mark of success with language."¹ Goodman goes on to state that when a child "learns the system of language his perceptual process becomes one in which he predicts and selects."²

Perception in language is a selective process. The young child learns what to expect and learns to ignore what is insignificant. While he learns this selective perceptual process the child acquires control over syntax (sentence patterns) and other grammatical features.³

Of course, no language has meaning apart from the experience of the user. Giving children a rich language experience in kindergarten builds readiness for reading. Hildreth found that "considerable attention has been given recently to listening as a neglected aspect of oral language comprehension. Listening with acute understanding carries over to reading with understanding."⁴

The teacher's object is to increase the child's store of word meanings in sentence contexts, to enlarge his vocabulary of syntax patterns along with his vocabulary of words.

Make use of oral narrative, conversation, and dramatization for child's readiness in the early reading experiences.

Reading material for beginners should make use of current experiences couched in the everyday spoken language the children know and use as a bridge to the less familiar written language and situation of the reading books.⁵

The school's purpose is to help children use language more effectively, in communication, in thinking and in learning. Read-

¹Loban, Language of Children, p. 29.

²Goodman, "Language Children Bring to School," p. 140.

³Ibid., p. 140.

⁴Gertrude Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors in Early Reading Instruction," Reading Teacher, XVIII (December, 1964), p. 176.

⁵Ibid., p. 177.

ing materials should deal with familiar situations, written in a language like his own oral language. Then he can bring all of his language power -- including his vast *sound knowledge* -- to bear on the task. It remains, then, "for the teachers of beginning reading to appropriately capitalize on the children's language opulence."¹

The two words, *language* and *experience*, are the best labels available for the approach to reading instruction which they name. The method is founded on the oral language facility of children. ...not language and experience, but "language-experience." It is this functional dynamism that makes the concept so sweeping. The human use of language (concepts), from infancy to old age, is based on experience² (percepts and cognition) and on man's need to communicate.

Loban reports that "almost all the pupils whose parents speak informal standard English have little need of drills on usage. What they do need is help on coherence, and such help cannot be achieved through a drillbook approach."³ Loban's research did not support the practice of drilling all pupils on the same skill.

Instruction using the tape recorder to enable "the pupil to become aware of how the same coherence occurs in writing, listening, and reading would seem equally helpful. Here is the point at which all the language arts reinforce instruction in any one aspect of language."⁴

It seems almost obvious that a certain level of verbal ability is essential for success in reading. What that level is has not yet been determined. Possibly beyond a certain point, facility in verbal expression does not add much to one's ability to read.⁵

¹Stauffer, "Psychological Aspects," p. 636.

²Ibid., p. 639.

³Walter Loban, Problems in Oral English (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966), p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 56.

⁵Samuel Weintraub, "Oral Language and Reading," Reading Teacher, XXI (May, 1968), p. 771.

Hildreth feels that "a good rule is: never begin reading instruction without first taking into account the child's status in oral expression."¹

The function of language is to communicate. Hence, teaching must be based on the functional use of language -- to communicate. Marquard believes that "the primary purpose is improving the communication between the teacher and pupil and out of this, improved knowledge and understanding."²

There is "an ever-increasing awareness that development of language is a most important skill for the young child. The child who fails to acquire adequate and efficient language skills is handicapped throughout the remainder of his life."³

The Importance of Language Development

Reading is built upon the foundation of verbal understandings and abilities which each child possesses when beginning to learn to read. Before a child can comprehend the meaning of a printed text he must understand the language patterns which the printed symbols represent. "Oral Language precedes and is basic to printed language."⁴

Stauffer points out that "children learn to listen and to talk and use oral language to serve themselves as they operate in the environs of their social-cultural world."⁵

There is much evidence which shows that the development of children in all areas is influenced by many factors; "hence there is no reason to believe that development in language is not

¹Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors," p. 176.

²Marquard, "Language Development," p. 1079.

³Walter B. Barbe, "Reading and Language in the Instruction of Young Children," Education, LXXXIX (September, 1968), p. 18.

⁴Marion Monroe, Growing Into Reading, (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1951), p. 68.

⁵Stauffer, "Psychological Aspects," p. 636.

affected by many factors within the child and in the environment in which he lives."¹

According to Loban, "the energy level or the health of the subject may also be decisive factors in the child's success or failure in converting an idea into a genuine unit of communication."² For some subjects, "apathy, lassitude, and low vitality appear to be concomitants of low language ability."³

Hildreth emphasizes that "since language deficiencies may be the major handicap of slow learners, for every such child a thorough assessment should be made of oral language proficiency and past history of language development."⁴

Strickland expresses her views and declares that "because rate of learning as well as degree of auditory perception differs from child to child, there are, in many elementary school classes, differences in the maturity which children show in their use of language."⁵

There are, no doubt, weaknesses which might be overcome in experimentation. "It is simply a means of utilizing to advantage the fact of discrepancies in aural, written, and visual vocabularies; thereby facilitating the language development of children."⁶

As a "substantial part of developing sound programs, more research is needed wherein the instruments used to measure reading achievement or language development must incorporate some of the relatively recent findings of linguistic research."⁷

¹Clyde Martin, "Developmental Interrelationships Among Language Variables in Children of the First Grade," Elementary English, XXXII (March, 1955), p. 170.

²Loban, Language of Children, p. 8.

³Ibid., p. 75.

⁴Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors," p. 176.

⁵Strickland, "Language of Elementary Children," p. 1.

⁶Marquard, "Language Development," p. 1079.

⁷James T. Fleming, "Oral Language and Beginning Reading: Another Look," Reading Teacher, XXII (October, 1968), p. 28.

Related Research Studies

Research, according to Goodman, indicates that, "except for a few complex refinements, children have mastered the grammatical system and rules of their community language by the time they are in school."¹

Evidence concerning the relation of a child's language experience to his reading achievement comes from various sources:

studies of normal children learning to read and write; studies of children with cultural deficiencies and intellectual differences in language and background, problems of foreign-speaking children in learning to read; studies of the mentally handicapped and of those with physical handicaps hindering the acquisition of speech.²

In her findings, Hildreth states that

it is doubtful whether a child can become a fluent reader, comprehending fully what he reads, without a good oral language foundation and continued attention to oral language improvement;

we build oral language ahead of and along with reading lessons if children are to learn to read well.³

In confirming the relation between oral language and beginning reading "assumptions about both the nature of language and the nature of reading act must be clear."⁴

First, the content of oral language is speech whereas the content of beginning reading material is written language.

Second, one need not generally teach children ⁵to speak, but one must, as a rule, teach children to read.

Strickland's study recorded and analyzed for syntactic

¹Goodman, "Language Children Bring to School," p. 140.

²Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors," p. 173.

³Ibid., p. 176.

⁴Fleming, "Oral Language," p. 28.

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

structures, samples of oral language of 575 elementary school children of grades one through six.¹

Its major purpose was to discover, isolate, and describe the patterns of syntax found in the oral language of elementary school children and to ascertain whether they appeared in certain representative reading textbooks designed for these grade levels.

The oral language children use is far more advanced than the language of the books in which they are taught to read. Perhaps this is as it should be, but evidence is needed as to whether children would be aided or hindered by the use of sentences in their books more like the sentences they use in their speech.²

In his longitudinal research, Loban found:

The low group says less, has more difficulty in saying it, and has less vocabulary with which to express what it says and

it would appear that members of the low group experience more difficulty in using and controlling the patterns of English syntax and therefore involve themselves in more language tangles or mazes per volume of spoken language than do members of the high group.³

Those subjects who proved to have the greatest power over language -- "*were the subjects who most frequently used language to express tentativeness*. Supposition, hypotheses, and conditional statements occur much less frequently in the language of subjects lacking skill in language."⁴

In a study undertaken by Menyuk, using forty-eight nursery school children and forty-eight first grade children, with an oral language sample of fifty sentences or more for each child, it was noted:

The purpose of this study was to use an explanatory model of grammar, (Chomsky's model of syntactic structures) to

¹Strickland, "Language of Elementary Children," p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 5 and p. 106.

³Loban, Language of Children, pp. 42-43.

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

determine if it was capable of describing a children's grammar as a self-contained system and of indicating development trends.

It was found that the basic structures which generated all the sentences obtained could¹ be described within the framework of the Chomsky model.

Several studies using different means to measure fluency in language have been reported by Weintraub.² Some of these will be discussed in greater detail below by Martin, Loban, and Morrison.

Martin felt that "the relationship of the oral language which was used informally by children to reading readiness at the beginning and reading achievement at the end of the first grade was virtually negligible. Only one oral language measure (the number of different words used) showed a low, positive relationship."³ Conclusions in Martin's study were the following:

There was little indication that the first grader who talked well would succeed in reading or that the poor speaker would have difficulty in it.

Each child, more-or-less, followed a zigzag pattern of development; consequently, parallel development in the language variables, as set forth in this study, should not be expected.⁴

In Loban's study and research, "the interrelations extend beyond the first grade and prove to be positive in the years beyond those covered in Martin's study."⁵

Morrison studied the relationship of the children's maturity in the use of various types of sentence structure to scores

¹Menyuk, "Syntactic Structures," p. 419.

²Weintraub, "Oral Language," pp. 769-771.

³Martin, "Language Variables," p. 168.

⁴Ibid., p. 171.

⁵Loban, Language of Children, p. 69.

on a readiness test. Findings indicated that:

The raw scores used to measure the children's level of sentence structure were correlated with the raw scores on the reading readiness tests. The correlation coefficient was found to be .721. A separate correlation was made for weighted scores for the number and kind of clauses. This coefficient was .722.¹

The following statement was concluded by Weintraub in the summary of his article:

Counting the number of words and the length of the phonological units may have led to neglect of what the child is saying. It may be that the quality of his response, a factor far more difficult for researchers to assess, is more important than the number of words he uses or the number of different words represented in his speech.²

This chapter dealt with definition of terms used in language; the nature of oral language skills; the importance of language development and research concerned with related studies.

¹Ida E. Morrison, "The Relation of Reading Readiness to Certain Language Factors," Challenge and Experiment in Reading, Ed. J. Allen Figurel, International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, VII (New York: Scholastic Magazines, 1962), pp. 120-121.

²Weintraub, "Oral Language," p. 771.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

First grade teachers keep looking for an appropriate method to use in order to accurately group their class in readiness or beginning reading. In Foundations For Reading, a revision of Monroe's book Growing Into Reading, Chapter Two states the importance of evaluating children's language ability.¹

Even more important to the teacher of beginning reading is the fact that oral language skill is the basis of learning to read. Thus, early recognition of the various levels of language ability possessed by the pupils in her class gives the teacher the necessary basis for planning her total language-arts and pre-reading program.²

How best to obtain this information was the goal pursued in this paper.

The population was composed of 40 pupils in grade one at St. Mary School in West Bend, Wisconsin. All had attended kindergarten in the area. The writer had a class of 28 of these pupils; the other 12 pupils were taught by a teacher of comparable experience who also had 6 second grade pupils. Of the 40 first graders, 15 were boys and 25 were girls. Two boys had repeated kindergarten and one lad was repeating grade one. The chronological ages of the subjects ranged from 6 years 2 months to 7 years 8 months.

Readiness Test

In August, 1969, cumulative folders for entering first graders were sent from the respective public school kindergarten

¹Marion Monroe and Bernice Rogers, Foundations For Reading, (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964), pp. 24-45.

²Ibid., p. 25.

classes. A percentile rank score was obtained for each child from his individual record sheet on the Metropolitan Readiness Tests.¹ This test was chosen because it was the test used by the local school district administered to kindergarten youngsters in May. These were studied as an aid to grouping of pupils in reading.

Intelligence Test

Early in the school year, an intelligence test was administered to measure the potential mental ability of these newcomers. Level 1, Form B, Primary Battery of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests was administered.²

The test consists of three subtests, each of which takes about seven or eight minutes to administer. Since children at this grade level cannot be expected to work continuously for very many minutes, they should be given a rest or a change of activity between subtests. If it is practicable, it would be desirable to give the three subtests at separate testing sessions -- ideally on separate days.³

The 40 children were tested by the principal in four groups of not more than twelve in any one group. Each of the three subtests was administered before recess to each group three consecutive days; Tuesday, Part 1; Wednesday, Part 2; and on Thursday, Part 3.

Tests were corrected and scored by the area coordinator.

Achievement Tests

A sound basic primary reading program gradually develops competence in the fundamental skills necessary for reading achievement. As a child proceeds from one level to another, it is important to determine the result or effectiveness of instruction. Achievement tests are designed to help the teacher ascertain to

¹Hildreth, Metropolitan Readiness Tests.

²Lorge and Thorndike, Intelligence Tests.

³Ibid., Examiner's Manual, p. 2.

what extent the individual child and the group as a whole have responded to instruction at a particular level.¹

The children had been divided into four flexible reading groups according to their level of instruction. Since not all groups were ready at the same time, the Faith and Freedom Primer Test was administered on completion of This Is Our Family² during or after March. The Faith and Freedom First-Reader Test followed completion of These Are Our Friends³. Seven of the children did not finish this level of instruction in Grade One.

Story Picture Card

A child enters school already knowing how to speak and eagerly desiring to learn also to read. In Monroe's book, Growing Into Reading⁴, a guide can be found to evaluate the oral language achievement of these potential readers.

A picture would be selected to satisfy these criteria:

- 1) There would be two or more easily recognized characters in the picture, such as boy, girl, baby, mother, father, or pets.
- 2) There should be a central activity or "story", such as playing a game, having a picnic, making cookies, or getting ready for bed.
- 3) Each character should be doing something different.
- 4) The setting or background should be appropriate enough to indicate where the action is taking place, but not contain so many items as to distract from theme.⁵

¹Marguerite and Bernarda, Faith and Freedom Achievement Tests, Teacher's Manual, p. 1.

²Marguerite and Bernarda, This Is Our Family, Manual.

³Marguerite and Bernarda, These Are Our Friends, Manual.

⁴Monroe, Growing Into Reading, pp. 75-87.

⁵Monroe and Rogers, Foundations, p. 27.

In September, in an all-purpose room, that was a familiar part of the school environment, the principal set up the necessary equipment: a low table with a "Story Card Number 5", Accident Scene -- the Injured Paper Boy, from The Peabody Language Development Kit (Level #1)¹, and a tape recorder. The principal administered the story picture card. The children were conducted to this room individually and each was encouraged to look at the picture and "tell all about it." During one morning session their verbal output was recorded on tape, preceded by their name. Later, the principal transcribed the speech responses of each child to typewritten form. Each transcript was analyzed in relation to idea quality, ability to verbalize ideas, and sentence structure.²

Monroe's rating scale has five levels, ranging from Level 1, the lowest, up to Level 5, the highest. The levels used in this paper were:

Levels of Expressiveness:

- Level 1. The child does not respond until encouraged and then with only a single (word or phrase or sentence) and cannot be persuaded to say more.
- Level 2. The child responds with one or more spontaneous remarks but cannot continue.
- Level 3. Child does respond with one of more spontaneous remarks and continues with another remark or two when requested.
- Level 4. The child responds freely, continues when requested and is highly productive.
- Level 5. The child's responses are at Level 3 or 4 but he includes the teacher in a conversational tone.

Levels of General Meaning:

- Level 1. Naming. The child merely enumerated the objects in the picture.
- Level 2. Description. The child describes a quality or action.
- Level 3. Interpretation. The child makes inferences about the feelings and relationships shown in the picture.

¹Lloyd M. Dunn, The Peabody Language Development Kit, Level #1, (Minneapolis: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1965).

²Monroe and Rogers, Foundations, p. 27.

- Level 4. Narrative interpretation. The child infers what has happened before or what the outcome will be. He gives at least two steps in a time sequence.
- Level 5. Evaluative interpretation. The child gives a moral or evaluates the picture in terms of a generality or draws a conclusion.

Levels of Sentence Structure:

- Level 1. Isolated words or phrases. These may be strung together by *and* or accompanied by gestures.
- Level 2. Simple sentences with one subject and one verb.
- Level 3. Simple sentences with a compound subject, predicate or object.
- Level 4. Compound sentence containing a conjunction other than *and*, or a complex sentence containing one dependent clause.
- Level 5. Sentences containing more than one dependent clause.

These scores were then added and used for a correlation with the children's reading achievement scores.

This procedure was conducted in the Fall of 1969. Instruction in reading proceeded regularly. In Spring of 1970 the achievement tests in reading were administered.

¹Monroe, Growing Into Reading, pp. 77-81.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

It is the purpose of the present Chapter to consider the data related to the analysis and evaluation of the various tests administered to ascertain the correlation between the oral language a child possesses when entering Grade One and his reading achievement at the end of this first school year.

Description of Groups

The chronological ages of the subjects ranged from 7 years 8 months to 6 years 2 months at the time of the intelligence test administration. Of the 40 children in Grade One at St. Mary School in West Bend, Wisconsin in the Fall of 1969, three boys had repeated a year of school, two in kindergarten and one in first grade. Children must be 6 on or before September First.

Readiness Test

Ordinarily, a total score provides an adequate basis for classification and grouping of pupils, particularly with respect to the formation of instructional groups in reading. The total score may be converted to a percentile rank. This rank indicates the per cent of pupils in the national standardization group making scores equal to or lower than the score in question. Thus the teacher has an indication of how each pupil compares in over-all readiness status to a representative group of beginning first-grade pupils.¹

¹Hildreth, Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Manual of Directions, pp. 8-9.

Table 1 shows the distribution of Percentile Rank Scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. A thorough study of these per-

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF METROPOLITAN
READINESS TESTS SCORES

Percentile Rank	Number of Pupils
Above 91: Superior	3
71-90: High Normal	12
31-70: Average	21
7-30: Low Normal	4
Below 7: Low	0

centile rank scores showed that the majority of pupils were likely to succeed in first-grade work. Several had good prospects for success in first-grade work provided that health, emotional factors and personality development were favorable. A few pupils at each end of the distribution would need more individual help.

Intelligence Test

Many teachers find it helpful to form small groups within a class for purposes of instruction. Grouping for instruction in beginning reading is perhaps the most frequent. Level 1 of the Lorge-Thorndike Tests may be used, either alone or in combination with a reading readiness test, to guide the teacher in forming such working groups.¹

Lorge-Thorndike I.Q.'s may be interpreted within the following framework:

About 68 percent of all I.Q. scores will fall between I.Q. of 84 and 116 (about 2 out of 3). About 14 percent will

¹Lorge and Thorndike, Intelligence Tests, Examiner's Manual, p. 11.

fall between I.Q. scores of 68 and 84, about 14 percent between 116 and 132, and only 2 percent will fall below 68 or 2 percent above 132.¹

The results of the distribution of I.Q. scores in this paper followed the pattern as presented in *Table 2*. Seven pupils

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF I.Q. EQUIVALENTS ON LEVEL 1 OF THE
LORGE-THORNDIKE INTELLIGENCE TESTS

Range	Number of Pupils	Range	Number of Pupils
130-134	1	100-104	7
125-129	1	95- 99	7
120-124	2	90- 94	7
115-119	3	85- 89	2
110-114	2	80- 84	1
105-109	7	75- 79	0

had scores in the range of 100-104 with 16 pupils having scores above and 17 pupils having scores below this average distribution. In comparison to the Lorge-Thorndike I. Q. framework, the results showed 85 percent of the I. Q. scores fell between I. Q.'s of 84 and 116 and 15 percent fell between 116 and 132.

Score Distribution and Correlation

The distribution of scores received on the Primer Test of the Faith and Freedom Series is found in *Table 3*. The scores did range from 80 - 99. The median was 92.

Children, scoring below 80, repeated instruction and then, retested on skills, were included in *Table 3*.

¹Lorge and Thorndike, Intelligence Tests, Examiner's Manual, p. 20.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMER TEST SCORES (N=40)

Score	Number of Pupils	Score	Number of Pupils
100	0	89	3
99	1	88	0
98	2	87	1
97	1	86	2
96	3	85	2
95	3	84	1
94	5	83	1
93	3	82	2
92	5	81	1
91	1	80	2
90	1		

In *Table 4* is found the distribution of the First Reader Test Scores. These scores range from 80 - 100 with the median of

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST READER TEST SCORES (N=33)

Score	Number of Pupils	Score	Number of Pupils
100	7	89	1
99	1	88	2
98	3	87	1
97	0	86	1
96	6	85	1
95	1	84	2
94	1	83	0
93	0	82	0
92	1	81	0
91	3	80	2
90	0		

96. Seven children did not complete instruction in the First Reader, These Are Our Friends. Instruction at first reader level would continue in a special class in Grade Two.

In order to evaluate the oral language achievement of these beginning first graders, a story picture card score was totaled from each of their responses to a stimulus picture. Monroe's first three levels of language abilities were deemed appropriate and were used for this analysis.¹ The entire scale consists of levels of expressiveness, general meaning, sentence structure, of defining and qualities of speech. For a full revision of Monroe's article, see the Appendix, pp. 33-35.

Briefly summarizing the data in *Table 5*, the normal distribution of scores can be noted in expressiveness and sentence structure. The problem of lower scores in vocabulary in later grades is indicated in the scores of general meaning.

TABLE 5
DISTRIBUTION OF STORY PICTURE CARD SCORES

Levels*	Number of Pupils at each Level		
	Expres- siveness	General Meaning	Sentence Structure
5	1	4	2
4	6	7	4
3	25	12	24
2	6	12	10
1	2	5	0

*Suggested scale - Chap.III - pp. 19 - 20.

More children scored at Levels 1 and 2 in General Meaning and Sentence Structure than in Expressiveness. More children scored at Levels 4 and 5 in General Meaning than in Expressiveness or in Sentence Structure.

Table 6 shows the totals of the data used to find the de-

¹Monroe, Growing Into Reading, pp. 77-81.

gree of correlation between the story picture card score and the Primer Test. These data yielded a rather low positive relationship of .31.

TABLE 6

CORRELATION BETWEEN STORY PICTURE CARD
TOTAL AND PRIMER TEST (N=40)

Story Picture Card Total	Primer Test Total	Cor- relation
349	3623	r = .31

The correlation between the same story picture card score and the First Reader Test is slightly higher as expressed in *Table 7*. The correlation is .35.

TABLE 7

CORRELATION BETWEEN STORY PICTURE CARD
TOTAL AND FIRST READER TEST (N=33)

Story Picture Card Total	First Reader Test Total	Cor- relation
299	3073	r = .35

The data for the two tests were processed according to the machine formula for computing correlations. The raw scores of the tests and the totals needed for the computation to find correlation may be found in *Table 8* for the Primer Test and *Table 9* for the First Reader Test.¹

Study of *Tables 8* and *9* does not reveal the tendency for

¹See *Tables 8* and *9* in the Appendix, pp. 30-31.

youngsters scoring high on the oral language sample to rate high on the reading achievement test. This accounts for the rather low correlations of .31 and .35.

The raw scores of all tests used in this research paper are represented in *Table 10*.¹ The pupils are arranged according to the Intelligence Quotient Equivalents. Analysis of the data in Table 10 displays the tendency of the first-grade children to have irregular scoring patterns. Four of the seven children who did not take the First Reader Tests were also low in Intelligence Quotient and Story Picture Card Score.

¹See Table 10 in the Appendix, p. 32.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing study was undertaken to determine the extent to which the oral language of beginning first grader would predict their reading achievement at the end of the same school year.

The specific objectives included an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Does oral language effectiveness predict reading achievement in a first grade child?
2. Was there any significant correlation between oral language and reading achievement in a first grade child?

Summary of Findings

The writer, through this research, has endeavored to show that oral language effectiveness alone cannot predict reading achievement in a first grade child, and with Weintraub, doubts the conclusion

that an important relationship is absent. Rather, the findings lead us to believe that measures of fluency in oral language development may be inadequate.

It seems almost obvious that a certain level of verbal ability is essential for success in reading. What that level is has not yet been determined. Possibly beyond a certain point, facility in verbal expression does not add much to one's ability to learn to read.¹

In answer to the second specific objective, the correlation indicated a rather low relationship existing between oral language as ascertained from oral language samples by means of a

¹Weintraub, "Oral Language," p. 771.

story and card stimulus and reading achievement as determined with the use of tests taken on completion of books read in Grade One.

Conclusions and Implications

Although the oral language factor alone of beginning first graders cannot predict their reading achievement at the end of the same school year, the writer believes it is an indication of some value. The teacher should be aware of pupils needing practice in oral language experiences as well as pupil maturity, growth and personality development.

A study of the survey of literature in Chapter II indicated this same conclusion. In this study, as in Martin's study

each child, more or less, followed a zigzag pattern of development, and

there was little indication that the first graders who talked well would succeed in reading or that the poor speaker would have difficulty in it.¹

Since classes of students differ from year to year, any replication of this experiment could yield a different relationship between oral language and reading achievement each year.

Suggestions For Further Research

Because the field is so broad and well-covered, the following suggestions are humbly given.

1. Further study of like research could be employed using Chomsky's model for syntactic structures in analyzing oral language samples.
2. Further research investigating the impact of oral language instruction on reading achievement might be of value to the primary teacher.
3. Further study is needed to present concrete practical suggestions for developing effective speech habits and attitudes and/or speech power in the primary child.

¹Martin, "Language Variables," p. 168.

A P P E N D I X

TABLE 8

DATA FOR GENERAL ANALYSIS -- PRIMER
AND STORY CARD SCORES (N = 40)

Pupil	X*	Y**	XY	X ²	Y ²
1	9	93	837	81	8649
2	11	96	1056	121	9216
3	8	99	792	64	9801
4	10	94	940	100	8836
5	7	95	665	49	9025
6	8	85	680	64	7225
7	6	92	552	36	8464
8	13	92	1196	169	8464
9	10	89	890	100	7921
10	9	92	828	81	8464
11	9	93	837	81	8649
12	10	94	940	100	8836
13	14	97	1358	196	9409
14	8	95	760	64	9025
15	9	81	729	81	6561
16	9	94	846	81	8836
17	11	82	902	121	6724
18	8	96	768	64	9216
19	9	87	783	81	7569
20	8	86	688	64	7396
21	6	95	570	36	9025
22	9	89	801	81	7921
23	11	80	880	121	6400
24	8	89	712	64	7921
25	4	83	332	16	6889
26	10	92	920	100	8464
27	7	96	672	49	9216
28	12	98	1176	144	9604
29	6	80	480	36	6400
30	9	92	828	81	8464
31	10	86	860	100	7396
32	6	85	510	36	7225
33	14	94	1316	196	8836
34	5	84	420	25	7056
35	11	98	1078	121	9604
36	6	93	558	36	8649
37	7	94	658	49	8836
38	5	82	410	25	6724
39	7	91	637	49	8281
40	10	90	900	100	8100
Totals:	349	3623	31765	3263	329297

* - Story Card Score

** - Primer Test Score

TABLE 9

DATA FOR GENERAL ANALYSIS -- FIRST READER
AND STORY CARD SCORES (N = 30)

Pupil	X*	Y**	XY	X ²	Y ²
1	9	99	891	81	9801
2	11	100	1100	121	10000
3	8	100	800	64	10000
4	10	98	980	100	9604
5	7	87	609	49	7569
6	8	84	672	64	7056
7	6	94	564	36	8836
8	13	98	1274	169	9604
9	10	89	890	100	7921
10	9	100	900	81	10000
11	9	88	792	81	7744
12	10	96	960	100	9216
13	14	100	1400	196	10000
14	8	96	768	64	9216
15	9	100	900	81	10000
16	8	91	728	64	8281
17	9	86	774	81	7396
18	8	100	800	64	10000
19	6	91	546	36	8281
20	11	91	1001	121	8281
21	8	88	704	64	7744
22	10	91	910	100	8281
23	7	96	672	49	9216
24	12	100	1200	144	10000
25	9	84	756	81	7056
26	10	96	960	100	9216
27	6	80	480	36	6400
28	14	95	1330	196	9025
29	5	85	425	25	7225
30	11	96	1056	121	9216
31	7	98	686	49	9604
32	7	86	602	49	7396
33	10	80	800	100	6400
Totals:	299	3073	28000	2867	287405

* - Story Card Scores

** - First Reader Scores

TABLE 10

RAW SCORES OF TESTS FOR GENERAL ANALYSIS

Pupil	I.Q. ^a	RP ^b	PTS ^c	FRTS ^d	Story Picture Response			
					E*	GM**	SS***	Totals
1	130	92	93	99	3	3	3	9
2	126	91	96	100	3	4	3	11
3	122	57	99	100	3	2	3	8
4	121	61	94	98	4	3	3	10
5	119	36	95	87	3	2	2	7
6	118	81	85	84	3	2	3	8
7	115	63	92	94	2	2	2	6
8	110	88	92	98	5	4	4	13
9	110	95	89	89	3	3	4	10
10	109	57	92	100	3	3	3	9
11	107	63	93	88	3	3	3	9
12	107	92	94	96	3	4	3	10
13	107	84	97	100	4	5	5	14
14	107	73	95	96	3	3	2	8
15	107	73	81	++	3	3	3	9
16	107	86	94	100	3	3	3	9
17	104	25	82	++	3	5	3	11
18	104	83	96	91	3	2	3	8
19	103	61	87	86	3	3	3	9
20	103	91	86	100	3	2	3	8
21	102	25	95	91	3	1	2	6
22	102	31	89	++	3	3	3	9
23	100	71	80	91	3	5	3	11
24	98	73	89	88	3	2	3	8
25	98	51	83	++	1	1	2	4
26	97	33	92	91	3	4	3	10
27	97	81	96	96	3	1	3	7
28	97	61	98	100	4	4	4	12
29	96	29	80	++	2	2	2	6
30	96	55	92	84	3	3	3	9
31	94	38	86	96	3	4	3	10
32	94	35	85	80	2	2	2	6
33	94	61	94	95	4	5	5	14
34	94	26	84	85	2	1	2	5
35	92	42	98	96	4	3	4	11
36	92	67	93	++	2	2	2	6
37	90	44	94	98	3	1	3	7
38	89	42	82	++	1	2	2	5
39	88	48	91	96	2	2	3	7
40	84	51	90	80	3	4	3	10

a= Intelligence Quotient

b= Readiness Percentile

c= Primer Test Score

d= First Reader Test Score

*= Expressiveness

**= General Meaning

***= Sentence Structure

++= Incomplete instruction

Foundations for Reading
Informal Pre-reading Procedures

by Marion Monroe & Bernice Rogers
Scott, Foresman & Company, Chicago
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SUGGESTED SCALE FOR QUALITY OF IDEAS -- pp. 30-32 (GENERAL MEANING)

1. Ideas fully concrete. Concerned with the immediate environment. Objects and events seen as separate items. Not concerned with relationships.

EXAMPLE: (response to a picture showing a dog jumping up to snatch an ice-cream cone from a baby's hand):

"It's about a baby and a dog and an ice-cream cone."

2. Sees some objects and events in relation to each other. Relationships seen are concerned with the concrete and the here and now. Characters are related to their actions.

EXAMPLE: (picture as described above):

"The baby's crying."

"The dog's jumping up."

"The baby's eating."

3. Sees relationships between objects and events, including relationships of size, shape, color, use, distance, and cause and effect. Begins to include in his ideas some people, things or events farther away in time or space. Recognizes simple emotional reactions and motives of character. Forms sensory images (visual, auditory, thermal, tactile, kinesthetic).

EXAMPLE: (picture as described above):

"It's a hot day."

"The baby wants the dog to go away."

"Somebody gave the baby an ice-cream cone."

"The baby's scared."

4. Sees relationships of various kinds as Level 3 but tends to include the more abstract qualities as well as the concrete and immediate. Anticipates events, deduces more complex cause-and-effect relationships and time relationships. Recognizes simple character traits.

EXAMPLE: (picture as described above):

"The dog wants to get the baby's cone. I think he's going to get it, too. He's a bad dog."

5. Ideas as at Level 4 but with the addition of some evaluation and judgment. Generalizes within the limits of his experience. Makes judgments which include consideration of abstract concepts.

EXAMPLE: (picture as described above):

"People shouldn't give babies cones when dogs are around."

"Pets are sometimes a nuisance."

"Dogs don't know any better."

SUGGESTED SCALE FOR ABILITY TO VERBALIZE IDEAS. (EXPRESSIVENESS)

1. No ideas clearly expressed. Talks very little or far too much. Confuses the listener through inappropriate use of words or inability to put words together to show their relationships. Frequently disorganized or even incoherent. May shrug shoulders, point to an object, or grimace without verbalizing.
2. Verbal expression of ideas severely limited, but better than Level 1. Words may sometimes not be clearly related to one another, or they may be inappropriate or incomprehensible, or may be too few to express an idea adequately.
3. Moderately clear in verbal expression. May sometimes become either blocked or overproductive, and may sometimes use words inappropriately, but manages to express some of his ideas adequately. May digress from his subject.
4. Uses words adequately for clear expression of his ideas. Appears to be able to say what he wants to say, and does not usually talk too much. Stays on the subject; usually avoids irrelevancies.
5. Same as Level 4 but in addition to the ability to express his own ideas, shows a desire and an ability to include others in a conversational manner in what he has to say. May, for example, try to exchange ideas with the teacher or with another pupil.

SUGGESTED SCALE FOR MASTERY OF SENTENCE STRUCTURE. (IBIDEM)

1. Has not mastered English syntax well enough to be understood. In most cases the result of a non-English home background.
2. May alter English word order somewhat in the firection of the syntax of another language, or in the direction of a regional or class pattern of English, but uses sufficiently idiomatic English to be understood.

EXAMPLE: *"That man I seen him."*

"That man I saw him."

(the form of the verb may be acceptable or unacceptable. This is not a question of structure, although the usage and structure variations frequently occur together.)

3. Approaches somewhat nearer to standard English sentence structure. Uses large numbers of subject-verb or subject-verb-object sentences strung together with *and...and...and* sentence. Uses *because* in an incomplete sentence in answer to a question asked.

EXAMPLE: *"Why did you draw a blue horse?"*

"Because I like blue."

Probably will not use a complete complex sentence with a *because* clause.

Shows relationships by running two ideas together rather than by formulating a complex sentence with an appropriate conjunction.

EXAMPLE: *"I read a book my mother gave it to me."
 "I got home my mother was gone."*

4. Manages more frequently to make a stop between sentences. Uses a larger proportion of complete sentences.
5. Approaches standard English syntax. Uses standard word order and a greater variety of acceptable word order. Connects related ideas by using appropriate connectors or implied connectors.

EXAMPLE: *"When I got home, my mother was gone."
 "I read a book my mother gave me."*

* *

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